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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION ON LINE OF  
PROPOSED FOUL WATER MAIN, 16th FEB 2004**

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**GAT Project No. G1701**

**Report No. 524**

Prepared for Galliford Try

By George Smith

February 2004



**Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd**  
**Gwynedd Archaeological Trust**

☎ 01248 352535    ✉ 01248 370925    email : gat@heneb.co.uk



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Gwynedd Archaeological Trust was asked by Gallifords to carry out a trial excavation in advance of a foul water pipeline construction to the west of the A55 Trunk Road on land of the former Ty Mawr Farm, south of Holyhead. The proposed pipe will cross under the A55 from the Penrhos treatment works, then one branch will turn to run to the north-west to join the road just south of the Gas control station. The general area had previously been evaluated for archaeological remains by documentary research and by geophysical survey and trial trenching (Kenney 2002). Four trenches had been excavated in this field close to the route of the proposed pipeline (Fig. 1). Two of these, only about 30m to the south, showed only sterile subsoil but the other two produced a wealth of features, including stone spreads, ditches and drains, thought to be part of a Romano-British settlement. It seems likely that features belonging to settlement this extended into the area of the proposed pipeline (Fig. 2).

## **AIMS AND METHODS**

The aims were to test the depth of topsoil on this line and to identify the presence of any archaeological features. The area had previously been used for topsoil dumping during the construction of the new A55 and previous archaeological work had shown that there was a considerable depth of topsoil here. It was felt that if the topsoil was as deep or deeper than the depth of the proposed pipeline trench then no archaeological disturbance would take place and no further work would be required.

Three trenches were excavated by min-excavator on the line of the proposed pipe, numbered 1, 2 and 3, from the west. Two small trenches were excavated along the main length of the pipeline. At the south-east there will be a pipe junction with an inspection chamber that will require a larger excavation and which happens to be closest to the site of the possible Romano-British settlement found in 2001. A larger trench, 5m square was therefore excavated at that point.

The trenches were laid out on the line of the pipe fixed by two of the surveyed pegs, A at the west, FEM 3 co-ordinates 225551/380980, B at the east, FEM 2 co-ordinates 225624/380980. Pegs A and B were also triangulated in by tape using the roadside wall as a base-line.

## **RESULTS**

### **Trench 1 (Fig. 4)**

This trench was 1.40m square. The ploughsoil lay directly over the subsoil, which was at a depth of 0.30m below the present ground surface. The subsoil was stony yellow-brown clayey silt. There were no archaeological features.

## **Trench 2 (Fig. 5)**

This trench was 2m square. The ploughsoil lay directly over the subsoil, which was at a depth of 0.36m below the present ground surface. There were no certain archaeological features but there was slight dip in the subsoil at the west edge, filled with more stony material, and this could be the edge of a feature, modern or otherwise.

## **Trench 3 (Fig3 and 6-7)**

This trench was 5m square. This trench was within a slight dip or valley in the field and the depth of soil was much greater than in trenches 1 and 2 with an overall depth of 0.80m to the subsoil. The top 0.40m of this was redeposited topsoil left after landscaping of the field following removal of the topsoil dumping from the new A55. Beneath this was 0.25-0.30m of the former topsoil at the base of which was a stony horizon or plough-sole. Beneath this was 0.20-0.30m of an old silty stone-free soil horizon. This was a naturally formed buried soil formed in the dip or valley in the field and had not been disturbed by ploughing. It was dark and humic towards the top, graduating to pale grey lower down in the profile. Into this had been cut a stone-filled field drain alongside which was a spread of redeposited subsoil from its original excavation. This drain is clearly of post-medieval date, related to the old ploughsoil, in which were fragments of transfer-printed table ware, plain cream-ware and Buckley ware. One other stone-filled feature was noted in the section of similar appearance and position to the field drain. There were no other features or finds to suggest the presence or proximity of any earlier activity of archaeological value.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Most of the length of the route of the proposed pipeline across the higher ground to the north-west has only a shallow topsoil, about 0.30m deep to the top of the clayey subsoil. The pipeline trench will therefore cut into the subsoil considerably and any archaeological features encountered will be affected. Neither of the two trenches contained any archaeological evidence but were too small, at 1.4m and 2m square, to provide any kind of sample of the area.

The area of the pipeline junction and inspection chamber lies in a slight valley or dip in the field. This was found to contain a greater depth of topsoil than the trenches further to the north-west. The overall soil depth here, to the subsoil surface, was up to 0.80m deep comprising partly the remains of redeposited topsoil from the A55 construction, partly the former topsoil, which had been buried by the A55 dumping and partly by an older silty unploughed buried soil. The latter had been cut through by a post-medieval field drain which seemed to be associated with a spread of 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery at the base of the earlier ploughsoil. There was once a farmhouse 100m to the west, called Pen-y-lone in the eighteenth century, later Penbonc-deg and Bonc-deg (Kenney 2002, Feature 10). The presence of post-medieval pottery in the ploughsoil, from middening would be likely to get greater, the nearer to the farmhouse. The buried soil was a natural uncultivated soil that was present when the field drain was dug. There is no evidence as to when it may have developed but lay directly over the natural subsoil so did not seal any layers relating to the possible Romano-British settlement and is most likely to post-date that activity. The former field

boundary to the east was present as early as 1817 and followed the line of the hollow so probably had its origin as a drainage line.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The pipeline will cut into any archaeological remains that may be present, as indicated by the previous evaluation geophysical survey and trial trenching (Fig. 2 and Appendix 1, below) although the present three trial trenches provided no further evidence of archaeological remains. It might be expected that some evidence would be found of a settlement only 20m away. However, two of the trenches ( Fig. 1, 50 and 52) excavated a similar distance away during the previous evaluation also produced no remains (Appendix 1B). The settlement may therefore be quite small and its remains closely grouped and that would be typical of a Late Iron Age and Romano-British settlement in north-west Wales. A watching brief accompanied by basic recording during the pipeline excavation therefore seems most appropriate rather than the full excavation recommended for the settlement area itself (Appendix 1C, below).

## **REFERENCES**

Kenney, J. 2002. *Land at Ty Mawr, Holyhead: Archaeological assessment and field evaluation*, GAT Report No. 459.



## APPENDIX 1

### LAND AT TY MAWR, HOLHEAD, THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AND FIELD EVALUATION 2000-2001:

#### DATA RELEVANT TO THE PROPOSED PIPELINE

##### A. Geophysical survey in the area adjacent to the proposed pipeline (Fig. 2)

###### *Grid P*

(Trenches 51, 52, 54)

An area of four 20m grids (1600 sq. m) was surveyed over the area used for a topsoil storage area during the construction of the A55. One of the aims of the geophysical survey was to ascertain whether the area had been damaged or merely covered up during the topsoil storage and removal. The survey results were unusually noisy and there were several areas of increased noise (a to f). The noise was however not entirely random and some faint linear features were visible towards the centre of the survey area (c). These anomalies may represent plough scars or, along with the areas of noise, other buried archaeology. They strongly suggest that the area was not cleared to below the top of the subsoil and that archaeology could potentially have survived.

##### B. Archaeological evaluation trenches excavated adjacent to the proposed pipeline

###### **Trench 50** *Area: 40 sq. m*

###### Description

Topsoil was removed to a depth of 0.3m to 0.75m revealing undisturbed stony greyish brown subsoil. No archaeological features were identified.

###### **Recommendations for further work**

None: the trench was archaeologically sterile.

###### **Trench 51** *Area: 40 sq. m*

###### Description

The trench was dug in an area that was used as a topsoil storage dump during the construction of the A55 in late 2000. Topsoil was removed to a depth of around 0.6m revealing that the original ground surface was undisturbed and a layer of imported topsoil had been left behind. The trench was found to contain a large number of archaeological features. The features were in general not excavated but were recorded in plan (Fig. 4) and photographed. At the eastern end of the trench were two substantial, possibly intersecting, stone capped drains (a and b). A spread of angular and burnt stones (c) filled most of the western end of the trench. This was 6.5m wide and of unknown length and was bounded on the east by a possible ditch (d). A fragmentary stone wall (e) was standing on the stone spread (c) and this appeared to be associated with a deposit of darker gravel (f) again overlying the stone spread. The stone spread was cut by a silted field drain. A stone lined pit or post hole (h) was identified close to the centre of the trench and a modern field drain (i) crossed the middle of the trench. Further stone features were observed in the eastern half of the trench but these were not well defined and were not investigated. None of the features produced any dating evidence, which suggests a pre-19<sup>th</sup> century date, as does the fact that

no structures are recorded in this area on maps or documents of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The excavated surface was covered with a water permeable membrane before backfilling.

#### ***Discussion***

The trench was found to contain a wealth of undated archaeological features most of which did not appear to be modern. The extent and date of the features remains unknown.

However, present evidence would suggest the site is of at least regional importance (Category B), although further work may require re-assessment of this. The site has been allocated number 42.

#### ***Recommendations for further work***

Additional geophysical survey and trial excavation is required to ascertain the status and extent of the remains. Full excavation will be required if the remains are to be disturbed.

#### **Trench 52** Area: 40 sq. m

##### **Description**

Topsoil was removed to a depth of 0.45m onto undisturbed natural grey and orange gravels. No archaeological features were identified.

#### ***Recommendations for further work***

None: the trench was archaeologically sterile.

#### **Trench 54** Area: 40 sq. m

##### **Description**

This trench was dug about 15m to the north-west of trench 51 in order to assess the extent of the features found therein. The trench was again dug in the area that had been used as a topsoil storage dump during the construction of the A55. Topsoil was removed to a depth of between around 0.6 and 0.85m removing the original ground surface and a layer of imported topsoil. The trench was found to contain a large amount of archaeological features. The surface was cleaned by hand. The features were not excavated but were recorded in plan (Fig. 4) and photographed. They consisted of a series of linear and curvilinear cuts running at close to 90 degrees across the trench. Feature (a) was interpreted as being a 2.8m wide ditch and this was cut by a linear stony feature (b). Feature c was a 1.8 m wide cut of debatable shape (due to the width of the trial trench). Feature d was interpreted as a 0.8m wide subcircular pit, cutting narrow linear feature e. Feature f appeared to be a truncated feature with a fill stones some of which were fire-cracked. Feature g was thought to be a field drain. Feature h appeared to be a part of a larger curvilinear cut and feature i was a somewhat irregular stony feature containing fire-cracked cobbles. A heavily abraded rim sherd of fine grained pottery tentatively dated to the Roman period was recovered from this surface.

#### ***Discussion***

The features in this trench can presumably be seen as a continuation of the activity in trench 51 and should be seen as part of the same site (42). The recovery of an apparently Roman or Romano/British pottery sherd adds weight to the hypothesis that this is a site of some importance. It should however be noted that the pottery could be residual and be unconnected with feature i. For further discussion see trench 51.

#### ***Recommendations for further work***

See trench 51.

### **C. The summary archaeological assessment**

The area just south of the proposed pipeline was identified as an area of regional archaeological value as a result of the geophysical survey and trial excavations:

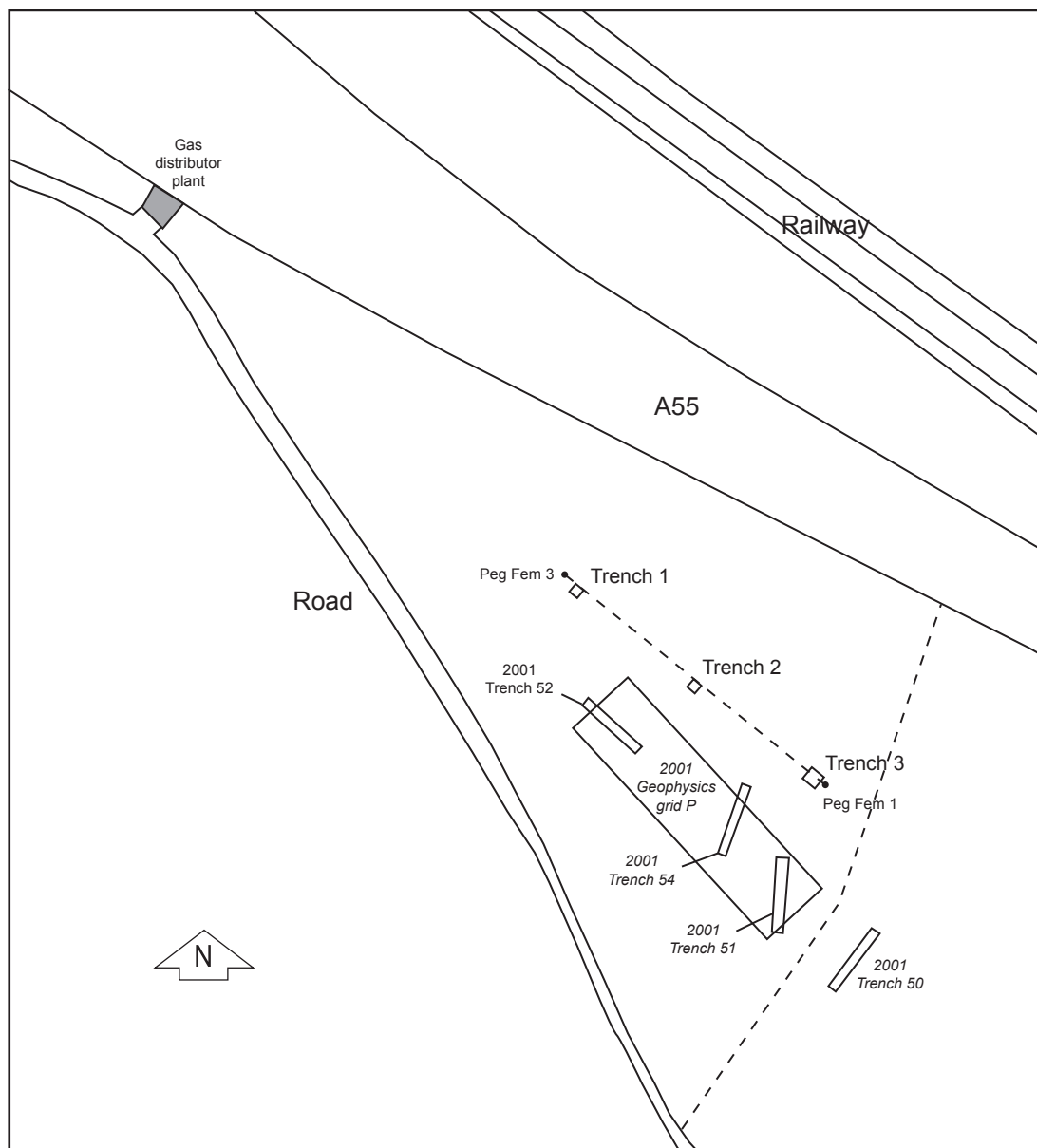
#### **Site 42 Prehistoric settlement remains**

##### **Category B**

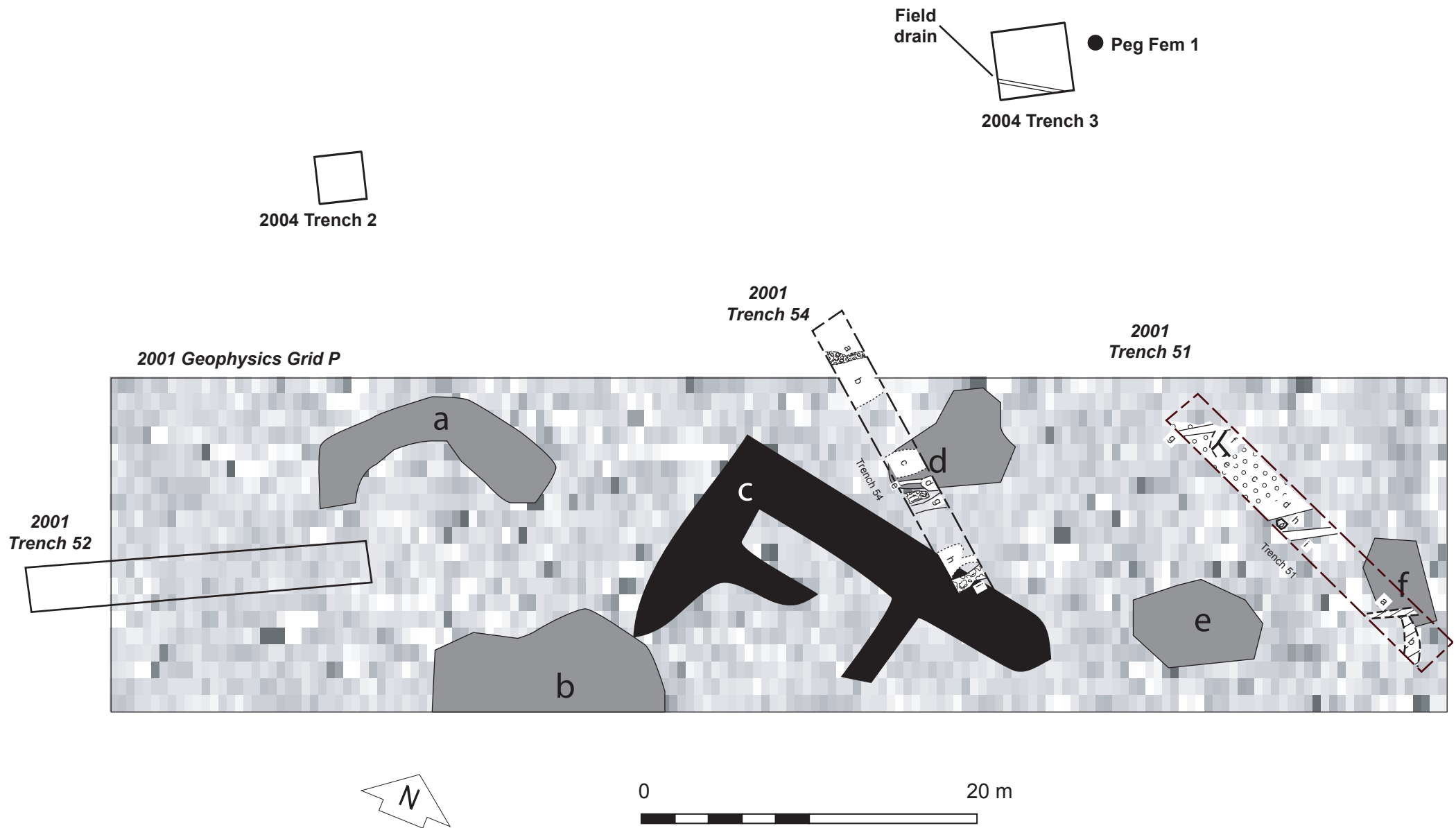
Excavation within Trenches 51 and 54 revealed a variety of features, including stone capped drains, burnt stone and fragmentary stone walls. Although some of the features undoubtedly relate to the complex of small fields which surrounded Bonc Deg (Site 36), for example feature *i* in trench 54, the other features are interpreted as part of a late Prehistoric and Romano-British settlement. Although there is no firm dating evidence, one sherd of pottery has been tentatively identified as Roman in date, and the features are typical of those found on such sites.

***Recommendations:*** Further evaluation is required to ascertain the full extent of the remains, and the date and function of the site. Intensive geophysical survey, combined with stripping and recording of an area some 400 sq. metres in extent is recommended. Preservation in situ is recommended, but full excavation is required if it is to be disturbed by construction.

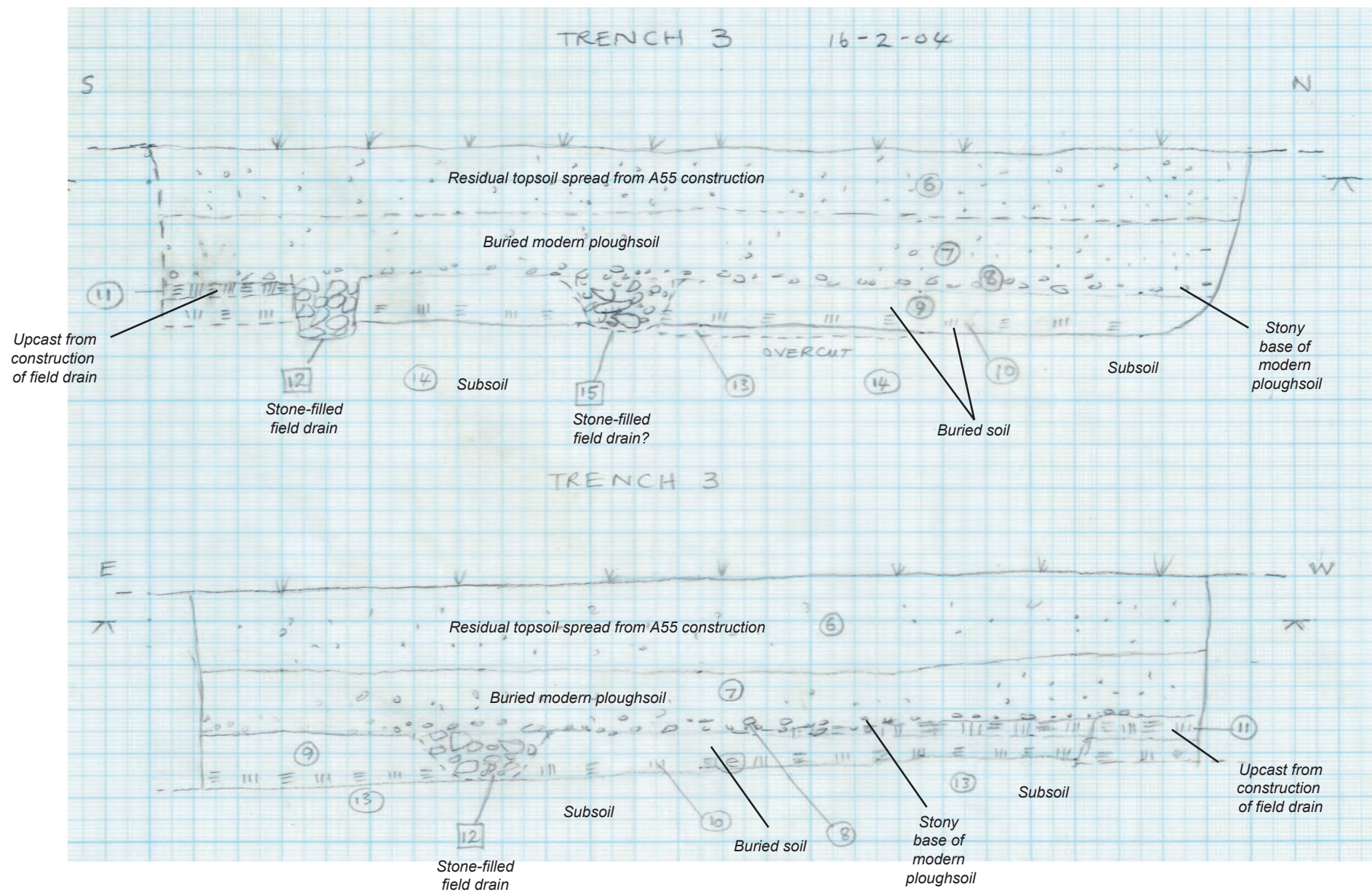




Ty Mawr, Holyhead Fig. 1 Location of archaeological trial trenches in relation to previous archaeological evaluation trenches and geophysics area.  
Scale 1:2000



Ty Mawr, Holyhead Fig. 2 Detail of 2001 and 2004 archaeological evaluation trenches in relation to geophysics results in Grid P



Ty Mawr, Holyhead Fig. 3 Trench 3. Field drawings of sections. Scale 1:20





Ty Mawr, Holyhead Fig. 4 Trench 1. From the south-west. Scale with 50cm divisions



Ty Mawr, Holyhead Fig. 5 Trench 2. From the south-west. Scales with 50cm divisions





Ty Mawr, Holyhead Fig. 6 Trench 3. South-west section, from the north-east.  
Scale with 50cm divisions



Ty Mawr, Holyhead Fig. 7 Trench 3. North-west section, from the south-east.  
Scale with 50cm divisions







Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Gwynedd  
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust

Craig Beuno, Ffordd y Garth, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2RT Ffon/Tel 01248 352535 Ffacs/Fax 01248 370925  
e-mail: [gat@heneb.co.uk](mailto:gat@heneb.co.uk) web site: [www.heneb.co.uk](http://www.heneb.co.uk)